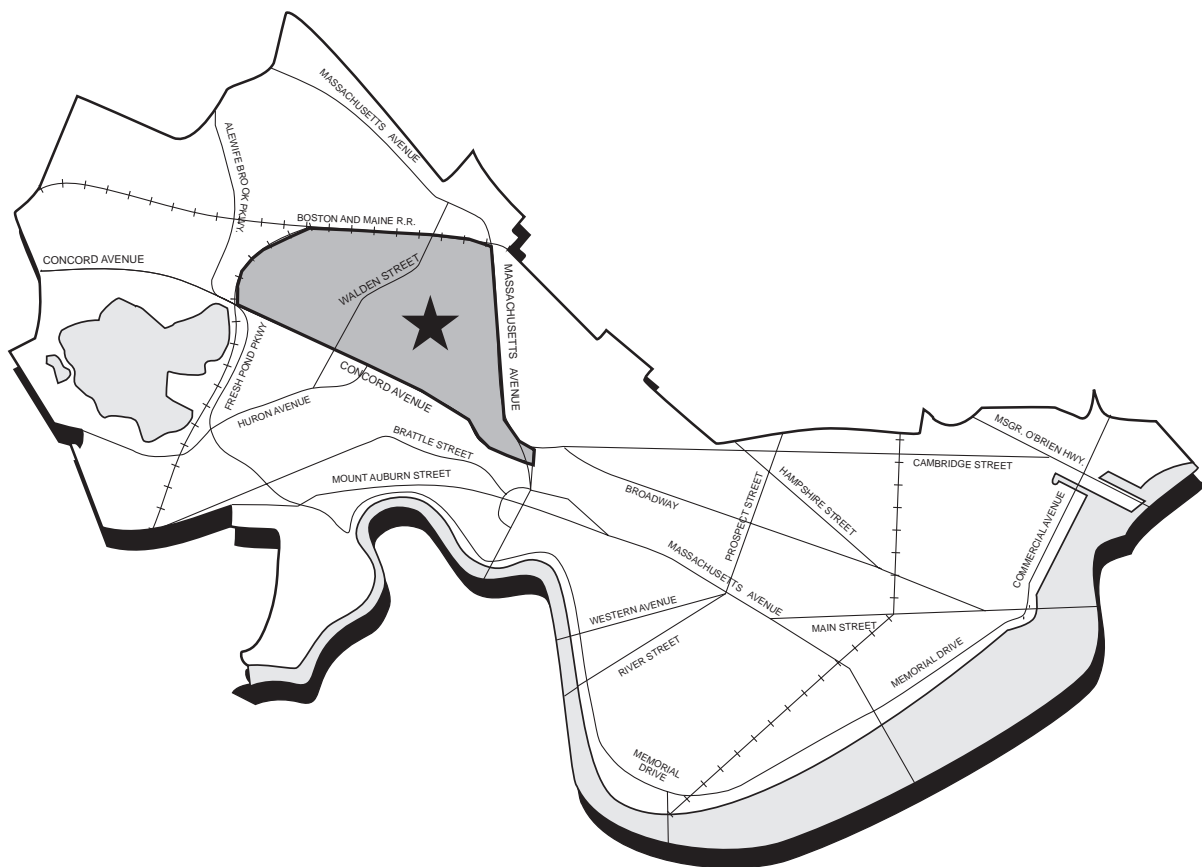

I N T R O D U C T I O N

City of Cambridge
Neighborhood Nine Location



Introduction

The Neighborhood Study Process

During the 1980s the City of Cambridge, along with the surrounding region, witnessed a wave of commercial growth and economic development. This growth expanded the City's tax base and created new jobs and opportunities for its residents. While many residents welcomed this prosperity, it also brought about an increasing awareness of issues which are of concern to neighborhood residents: increased building density, traffic congestion and parking problems, the rising cost of housing, inadequate open space, and the threat to neighborhood character and quality of life.

Since 1988, the Community Development Department (CDD) through its neighborhood planning program has conducted comprehensive studies in seven of the City's neighborhoods. The object of the neighborhood studies is to identify major planning problems and concerns through a joint CDD and community study committee and formulate recommendations for their solutions. The studies address issues such as traffic and parking, housing affordability and home ownership, neighborhood commercial areas and employment, park maintenance and rezoning of areas now inappropriately zoned. As part of each neighborhood study, CDD collects data on demographic changes since 1980, as well as changes in housing markets, land use, and development potential in each neighborhood.

For each study, the City Manager appoints a committee of neighborhood residents, small

business owners, and civic leaders, along with staff from the CDD, to review the data, identify problems that exist in the neighborhood, and make recommendations as to how to resolve these problems. The recommendations are presented to the City Council, and, where appropriate, are incorporated into the work programs of City departments for implementation over the next several years.

The Neighborhood Nine Study

In the fall of 1993, CDD staff placed advertisements in the local papers seeking Neighborhood Nine residents to join the upcoming study committee. City Manager Robert Healy named 12 applicants to the committee. The newly named members came from all of the different parts of the neighborhood with the aim of representing the demographic diversity of Neighborhood Nine. Some of the members were lifelong residents, while others had lived there less than ten years.

The Neighborhood Nine Study Committee met weekly for seven months from November 1993 until May 1994. The Study Committee reviewed, discussed, and debated issues of housing, parks, public safety, economic development, land use, zoning and urban design. They listened to a range of speakers from representatives of educational institutions to city staff responsible for traffic and zoning policies, and took walking tours to see each part of the neighborhood. Through the discussions, they identified problems facing the neighborhood and

worked together to develop recommendations for each topic.

At the end of the process, the Study Committee offered over 60 recommendations ranging from opening up university facilities for neighborhood use, to creation of an “adopt-a-park” program, to rerouting certain streets to prevent traffic from cutting through the neighborhood. The Study Committee offers this study and its recommendations to the Neighborhood Nine community as a means to create a long-term planning guide for the evaluation of the neighborhood and to secure its well-being in the years to come.

The City of Cambridge Growth Policy

The Neighborhood Study process is seen as an extension of the City’s Growth Policy document, “Towards a Sustainable Cambridge,” which outlines the City’s planning assumptions and policies in the areas of land use, housing, transpor-

tation, economic development, open space and urban design. The document was drafted by CDD staff in 1992-3 after a series of workshops with citizen, business and institutional representatives. It recognizes that the City’s diversity of land uses, densities and population groups should be retained and strengthened. The document also calls for careful development of the City’s evolving industrial districts.

While the growth policy document is comprehensive, it does not prescribe land uses or designs for specific sites. Each of the City’s 13 neighborhoods has distinct needs and resources which can be identified and addressed through neighborhood studies and the City’s planning policies. The Growth Policy and neighborhood studies complement each other by informing the community of important issues, recommending a plan of action to address the concerns, and utilizing current policies to implement change.

M E T H O D O L O G Y

Methodology

The Study Committee produced its recommendations through an extended process of issue identification, data collection and analysis, and further review and discussion. CDD staff supported this process by gathering and presenting data from a number of sources, chief among them the U.S. Census, a random telephone survey of Neighborhood Nine residents, and the Cambridge Assessing Department.

The U.S. Census: 1980 and 1990

The Census is a survey of every household taken every ten years by the U.S. Commerce Department Census Bureau as mandated by federal law. It collects demographic information on age distribution within the population, household composition, racial makeup, income, length of residency, ancestry and other categories. In theory, the Census is a survey of every household and provides us with a complete profile of the City and its residents. Census data is available from the CDD.

1990 Random Telephone Survey of Neighborhood Nine Residents

In 1993, the City contracted with the consulting firm, Atlantic Marketing Research Co., Inc., to conduct a random telephone survey of 373 households in Neighborhood Nine to determine the demographic character of the neighborhood as well as residents' perceptions and attitudes on issues of community concern. Atlantic divided Neighborhood Nine into two sections — north of Upland Road and south of Upland Road — for

analytical purposes, because of distinct demographic and living patterns in those areas. The Neighborhood Nine survey is one of a series of telephone surveys conducted by the CDD in several neighborhoods in conjunction with the neighborhood study process.

The survey instrument is composed of 66 questions designed by the CDD with assistance from the consultant. It is a combination of open-ended questions (those to which the respondent can give any response desired) and objective questions with a specified range of answers. The instrument includes four broad categories of questions: general demographics, housing, employment, and attitudinal.

The survey was done, in part, to elicit demographic information similar to what is provided through the Census but was not yet available, was in need of updating, or was not part of the federal questionnaire. Typically, it takes the Census Bureau two to three years to process neighborhood level data and make it available to municipalities. The intention of the telephone survey was to provide Study Committee members with as current a profile of the neighborhood as possible to inform their discussions. In addition, because of the structure of the survey data, CDD staff were able to use cross tabulations to develop more refined conclusions than those provided by the Census. For example, the Study Committee could analyze the neighborhood's population in terms of race, income, housing, and more.

The Census and the telephone survey are not directly comparable, as the Census is a house-by-

house survey, and the telephone survey is a sample of households. While one cannot compare numbers directly, general trends can be determined and general conclusions can be made.

Another very important reason for conducting the telephone survey was to gather attitudinal information from residents which is unavailable elsewhere. The survey asked residents questions about their views on development and its positive or negative effects; the need for more housing, especially affordable housing, and whether that should be rental or owner housing; whether, how often and for what reasons residents use neighboring commercial squares or districts; attitudes about the condition and availability of parks and open space; and other questions on other topics of concern in the neighborhood. The Study Committee could also use cross tabulations of attitudinal data with demographic data to get a more refined picture of neighborhood views, such as the attitudes of the neighborhood's elderly residents towards the condition and availability of open space.

Census information and the telephone survey results are available to the public from the CDD.

Cambridge Assessor's Data

The Study Committee used data from the Assessor's Office to analyze the nature and quality of the neighborhood's housing stock, to understand the market for renting or buying a house in

Neighborhood Nine, and to examine the remaining build-out potential in the neighborhood. Housing data included the number of buildings in each property class (one, two, three-family, etc.), the number of dwelling units, the number of housing sales in each property class, and sales prices. This data forms the basis for analyzing housing availability and affordability in the neighborhood. Property data, such as building and lot size, were gathered for all commercially zoned areas and higher density residential zoning districts. This information was used in calculating the amount of additional building allowed in the neighborhood under current zoning. All data are current through mid-1993.

The Cambridge Zoning Ordinance

The Zoning Ordinance, in conjunction with the Assessor's data, was used to determine the remaining build-out potential in Neighborhood Nine. The Zoning Ordinance is the part of the municipal code that governs the use of land and buildings in the City. For each zoning district, the ordinance lays out three types of general regulations: 1) use: what activities or mix of activities may or may not take place; 2) dimensional requirements: what floor-area-ratio, density, height or set back restrictions apply to any one building in any given zoning district; and 3) parking requirements: how many spaces, if any, must be provided for a building.